

Expeditions Fund Award Report

BA Geography

2016

I am a third year Geography student that was awarded the Expedition Fund Bursary, in order to help complete the data collection section of my dissertation. The research explored the county of Lamu as an emerging trade and commercial hub in Kenya. Through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews of stakeholders involved in two major development projects currently underway;

Lamu Port

In an effort to diffuse activities in the national economy and promote development in Kenya, the government undertook the Lamu Port Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor project aka Lamu Corridor project. The project's objective is to provide a second sea port and transport corridor gateway link to serve the expanding and export cargo base (Kenya High Commission, 2014). The aim is to establish the first trans-shipment port with an estimated worth of £5.5 billion, in Eastern and Southern Africa (LAPSSET, 2016), thus creating a new economic hub in the Kenyan economy. Justifications of the Lamu port seem to be predominantly economic; this includes the decrease in regional disparities as modification and modernisation in national transport as well as the establishment of a new economic hub will potentially increase economic activities in Lamu and all over Kenya. On an international scale, trans-shipment translate to wider reach and interactions of economic markets for the Kenyan economy, including Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Southern Sudan. This means that more employment opportunities will be created, stimulated investment in otherwise economically marginalised regions as well as overall increase in productivity in the regional economy. Aside from the actual Lamu Port, a new port city associated with the port referred to as Lamu Metropolis, comprising of port related industrial area and urban area, a resort city linked with five satellite tourism sites, an international airport, and two electric power stations (Kenya High Commission, 2014). At the moment, the status of Lamu Construction includes the successful completion of the main port headquarters building, police station beside it, the physical development plan and survey for the Port area and the design review for the first three berths, which will be financed by the Kenyan government (LAPSSET, 2016).

Amu Power

In addition to Lamu Port, Amu power is part of a wider regional initiative to develop Lamu county as a trade and commercial hub via Lamu development initiative (i.e. LAPSSET) linking three economies. The main objective of Amu Power is to develop a 900-1000MW coal fired power plant in the county of Lamu that would cost £1.5 billion (Otuki, 2016). The project is also part of the government of Kenya Least Cost Development Plan for power generation with the main aim of providing more stable and reliable power supply. The project is expected to constitute approximately 40% (Kazungu and Otuki, 2016) of the grid capacity and bring down the average cost of generation. The development project. In early 2015, the letter of Award was issued to Gulf Energy Limited and Centum Investment Company Limited. By July 2016, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study for the coal power plant was published by the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), which concluded that potentially there would be significant impacts on the environment, health of local citizens and social fibre of Lamu. After the publication, it was mandatory for the licensing authority requested comments from the public, most of which had genuine concern. However, eight days after of the comments received, NEMA issued an EIA licence to Amu Power (Kamau, 2016).

The funding significantly aided in the recruiting subjects for my research and as well as transport and accommodation. Whilst in Lamu, it was my duty to identify and interview the various stakeholders (fishermen, businessmen and women, activists, government officials) that would be affected by the implemented development projects. The interviews are medium that enables me, the researcher, a better understanding of

the discourses surrounding the production of nature and the practice of it in relation to development. The themes that were prevalent from the primary data consisted was high uncertainty, future generations, social cohesion and cultural fibre with the development projects seen as threats to them. My research aims to bring together the various production of nature in which the development projects are viewed as including the implementers' and that of the implemented and ultimately evaluate the significance of this in terms of betterment of Lamu.

Additionally, I had the pleasure of visiting the Save Lamu Organisation, which is community-based organisation aimed to promote sustainable and responsible development in Lamu. They do this by encouraging communities and stakeholders in participatory decision-making when it comes to development initiatives e.g. through rallies, protests etc. Their main concerns include the safety of the environment, social, and cultural integrity of Lamu in the midst of development.

The pictures below were taken during site visits in Lamu:



References:

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Kazungu, K. and Otuki, N. (2016). *Regulator withholds licence for Sh200 billion coal power plant*. [online] Businessdailyafrica.com. Available at: <http://www.businessdailyafrica.com/Regulator-withholds-licence-for-Sh200bn-coal-power-plant/539546-3447164-item-1-11o9mkkz/index.html> [Accessed 14 Nov. 2016].

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